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SUBJECT: CNPP PROMISES MAY 3 DEMONSTRATION

REF: ABUJA 709

CLASSIFIED BY ACTING DCM DEAN WOODEN FOR REASONS 1.5 B AND D.

1. (C) SUMMARY: The opposition Conference of Nigerian Political Parties (CNPP) is moving ahead with its plans to stage a protest march on May 3, supported by civil society, religious, and ethnic organizations, and says the lack of police clearance will not stop the demonstration. The CNPP produced a list of demands, including President Obasanjo's resignation and "free and fair" elections, and some of the biggest names in Nigerian politics and civil society are saying they will participate. CNPP Coordinator Balarabe Musa told PolOff that the goal for this rally is to show that "the leaders are willing to lead." 2003 presidential candidates Buhari and Ojukwu may well try to lead, and a big turnout would be a big headache for the GON. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) CNPP, the Yoruba ethnic organization Afenifere, northern Nigeria's Arewa Consultative Forum, the southeast's Igbo National Assembly and other groups announced the establishment of an umbrella organization to coordinate planning for the May 3 march in Abuja, and may also organize a demonstration at the same time in Lagos. Among the list of supporters are the second-tier leaders of the Nigeria Labour Congress, who have encouraged NLC rank and file to participate individually. Nigerians United for Democracy (NUD), the new organization, said it plans to conduct this first rally and will follow it with protests "throughout the country." Conflicting press reports claim various groups support or do not support the protest.

#### GOALS AND LEADERS

3. (C) NUD attorney Rotimi Williams told PolOff April 29 that the group planned to go ahead with the march. Balarabe Musa (the CNPP coordinator, former Kaduna State governor and PRP presidential candidate) told PolOff on April 23 that NUD expectations for this initial rally are modest. "We hope to show Nigerians that "the leaders are willing to lead." While some call the rally a "Two Million Man March," Musa said that he expected "thousands" to participate and would be satisfied with a turnout of 50 people "if the leaders are there." Musa said ANPP Presidential Candidate Muhammadu Buhari, APGA Presidential Candidate Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, APP 1999 Presidential Candidate Olu Falae, NADECO Chieftain Anthony Enahoro and respected gadfly Gani Fawehinmi had all been invited to play prominent roles at the rally. He said Buhari and Ojukwu plan to participate and Falae was expected to accept. Other sources agree that Buhari and Ojukwu will attend in person and that the Fawehinmi is working behind the scenes to help the organizers.

4. (C) Musa told PolOff, "We hope to develop the momentum" to sweep Obasanjo out of office and initiate open elections "on the style of recent events in Georgia." This rally was the first step in efforts to give Nigerians a way to express their dissatisfaction with the "rigged elections of 2003 and 2004," and with President Obasanjo's "imperious style of governance." Musa said the protest is meant to be a "peaceful and nonviolent" method of demanding democracy from the government. The CNPP had produced a list of demands, including the resignation of President Obasanjo and the conduct of free and fair elections, in advance of the April 19 anniversary of the 2003 Presidential elections. The CNPP delayed holding the protest on that day, according to them, "to continue coordination with the numerous groups that want to take part."

#### NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE?

5. (C) GON spokesmen still oppose the rally (reftel) and organizers do not have a permit for the demonstration. The organizers say they are moving ahead without any police permit, but have asked the police instead to provide security for the marchers. According to one police official, the group did apply for a permit to stage the rally, and the Deputy Inspector for Abuja accepted delivery of the request but told the organizers that he could not take action on it. "The Inspector General (of Police) will make the decision," he reportedly advised the organizers. Some of the organizers have complained that security in Abuja already has been tightened and many buses of potential demonstrators are being turned back on the highways into town. (NOTE: The GON normally restricts crowds going to the National Mosque in Abuja on Fridays by limiting bus traffic on the highways into

town. END NOTE.)  
ROBERTS